

## When Snowball Melted

Lovebirds. That's what all our friends called us when we first married. I guess Don and I deserved<sup>1)</sup> it. Money was tight because we were both full-time students, working to pay our way through school. Sometimes we'd have to save up days just for an ice cream cone. Still, our tiny, drab apartment seemed like paradise. Love does that, you know.

Anyway, the more we heard the term "lovebirds," the more we thought about birds. And one day we started saving up for a couple of lovebirds of our own: the feathery<sup>2)</sup> kind. We knew we couldn't afford to buy both birds and a nice cage, so in his spare moments, Don made the cage himself.

We set our cage in front of a shaded window. Then we waited until the crumpled envelope marked "lovebirds" was full of bills and spare change. At last the day came when we were able to walk down to our local pet store to "adopt" some additions to our little family.

We'd had our hearts set on parakeets<sup>3)</sup>. But the minute we heard the canaries<sup>4)</sup> singing, we changed our minds. Selecting a lively yellow male and a sweet white female, we named the youngsters Sunshine and Snowball.

Because of our exhausting schedules, we didn't get to spend too much time with our new friends, but we loved having them greet us each evening with bursts of song. And they seemed blissfully<sup>5)</sup> happy with each other.

Time passed, and when our young lovebirds finally seemed mature enough to start a family of their own, we went ahead and prepared a nest area and lots of nesting material for them. Sure enough, one day they began to find the idea very appealing. Snowball was a very exacting supervisor<sup>6)</sup> in designing and decorating their nest just so, while Sunshine, his face a glow with love, bent over backward to put everything just where she ordered.

Then one day an egg appeared. How they sang. And a few weeks later when a tiny chick hatched, their happiness seemed to know no bounds. I don't know how it happened genetically, but that baby canary was bright orange. So right off we named him Punkinhead.

The sunny days passed. How proud all of us were when our fledgling tottered out of the nest onto a real grown-up perch<sup>7)</sup>.

Then one day, Punkinhead suddenly plunged headlong from his perch to the bottom of the cage. The tiny orange bird just lay there. Both parents and I rushed to his rescue.

But he was dead. Just like that. Whether he'd had a heart attack before he fell or broke his neck in the fall I'll never know. But Punkinhead was gone.

Though both parents grieved, his little mother was inconsolable<sup>8)</sup>. She refused to let either Sunshine or me get near that pitiful little body. Instead of the joyful melodies<sup>9)</sup> I usually heard from Snowball, now she gave only the most excruciating cries and moans<sup>10)</sup>. Her heart, joy and will seemed completely melted by her sorrow.

Poor Sunshine didn't know what to make of it. He kept trying to push Snowball away from her sad station, but she refused to budge. Instead, over and over she kept trying to revive her adored child.

Finally Sunshine seemed to work out a plan. He convinced her to fly up and eat some seeds every so often, while he stood duty in her place. Then each time she left, he'd quietly place one piece of nesting straw over Punkinhead's body. Just one. But in a few days, piece by piece, it was completely covered over.

At first Snowball seemed disoriented when she looked around, but she didn't try to uncover the chick. Instead, she flew up to her normal perch and stayed there. Then I was able to quietly reach in and remove the little body, straw shroud and all.

After that, Sunshine spent all his time consoling Snowball. Eventually she started making normal sounds, and then one day, her sorrow finally melted and she sang again.

I don't know if Snowball ever realized the quiet labor of love and healing Sunshine had done for her. But they remained joyously devoted for as long as they both lived. Love does that, you know.

Especially to lovebirds.

□by Bonnie Compton Hanson

## 恩爱鸟

我们刚结婚时朋友们把我们叫做“恩爱鸟”，我想我和唐不愧于这个名字。由于我们俩都是全日制学生，靠打工挣学费，所以手头总是很紧。有时我们为了买个冰淇淋蛋卷就要攒好几天的钱。即使如此，我们那个狭小、简陋的寓所却像天堂一般，你要知道，这是因为有了爱。

不管怎么说，我们越是听“恩爱鸟”这个词，就越是琢磨小鸟。我们开始攒钱给自己买一对情侣鹦鹉，羽毛轻软的那种。唐利用业余时间自己做了个鸟笼，因为我们知道我们没钱既买鹦鹉又买个像样的鸟笼。

我们把鸟笼放在一个有阴凉的窗下，然后等待着有一天那个皱巴巴的、上面写着“情侣鹦鹉”的信封里面装满了纸币和多余的硬币。到当地的宠物店为我们的新家“领养”新成员的这一天终于到来了。

本来我们想养一对长尾小鹦鹉。可是一听到那金丝雀的歌声，我们就改了主意。我们挑了一只明黄色的雄鸟和一只奶白的雌鸟，给这对小鸟取名为：“阳光”和“雪球”。

由于我们太忙，没有太多的时间陪这两个新朋友，但我们爱听它们用美妙的歌声每晚迎接我们归来。它们看上去相处得也非常愉快。

时间一天天过去，这对小恩爱鸟终于长大成熟可以自己成个家了。我们提早在鸟笼里给它们准备了一个做窝的位置和许多做窝的材料。果然，有一天它们开始觉得这个主意不错。在设计和装饰爱巢这方面，雪球是个苛求的领导，而阳光则满脸兴奋地按雪球的指挥竭尽全力地把东西放好。

这之后的一天，一只鸟蛋出现了。阳光和雪球高兴地欢唱着。几个星期后，一只小鸟破壳而出，它们欣喜万分。我并不清楚遗传的方式，但这只小金丝雀却是明亮的橙黄色。我们马上想到了“南瓜头”这个名字。

阳光灿烂的日子一天天过去。看着我们的家伙羽毛日渐丰满并开始蹒跚地走出它的小巢爬到为成年鸟准备的栖木上，我们是多么地为它骄傲。

后来有一天，“南瓜头”突然从栖木上一头栽到了鸟笼子的底儿上。这只橙黄色的小鸟

躺在那儿一动不动。它的父母和我都立即冲过去抢救。

然而，它却死了，就那样地死了。我永远都搞不清楚它是怎么死的：是它在摔下来之前突发心脏病，还是在摔下来时折断了脖子？不管怎么样，“南瓜头”是永远地离去了。

鸟爸爸和鸟妈妈都很难过，然而小鸟妈妈却伤心至极。它拒绝阳光或是我接近那个可怜的小尸体。我听不到雪球像以前那样欢快地鸣唱，听到的只是它的悲叫与哀鸣。它的心、它的欢快和它的希望好像完全都被它的悲哀击碎了。

可怜的阳光不知所措，它一次又一次试着想帮雪球从这种悲伤的状态中解脱出来，但都遭拒绝。而雪球却一次次地想把它的爱子救活。

最后，阳光似是想出了一个办法，它成功地说服雪球不时地飞到上面的栖木去吃些东西，而它替雪球陪在死去的小宝宝身边。于是每当雪球飞走，它都悄悄地叼一根造窝的草盖在“南瓜头”身上，每次就一根。这样过了几天，一根根地，“南瓜头”的尸体就全被盖住了。

开始，雪球四处张望，好像失去了方向，但她并没有试图揭开盖在“南瓜头”身上的草，而是飞到它惯用的栖木上呆在那儿。这样我就可以悄悄地走近鸟笼挪走“南瓜头”的尸体和裹在它身上的东西。

在那之后，阳光把它所有的时间都花在安慰雪球上，雪球终于开始恢复了原来的声音。后来有一天，雪球的悲怆消融了，它又唱起歌来。

我无从知道雪球是否明了阳光为使它从悲伤中恢复过来而悄悄付出了爱的劳动。但它们却从此相爱终生。你要知道，这就是爱的力量。

对于“恩爱鸟”尤为如此。

## NOTE 注释：

deserve [di'zə:v] vt. 应受，值得

feathery ['feðəri] adj. 生有羽毛的，柔软如羽毛的

parakeet ['pærəki:t] n. [鸟]长尾小鹦鹉

canary [kə'nɛəri] n. [动]金丝雀

blissfully ['blisfuli] adv. 幸福地，充满喜悦地

supervisor ['sju:pəvaizə] n. 监督人

perch [pɜ:tʃ] n. 栖木

inconsolable [inkən'səuləbl] adj. 无法安慰的，极为伤心的

melody ['melədi] n. 悦耳的音调

moan [məun] n. 呻吟，哀悼